

**Wednesday Worship
23rd December 2020**

Advent 4—Birth and Re-birth

The candle is lit (A few moments of silence)

Luke 2.6-7

While they were there, the time came for [Mary] to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Beneath the surface of your story
is an inescapable fact.
You entered this world
as vulnerable as any one of us
in order to nail that vulnerability to the cross.
Our fears, our insecurities and our sins,
all that can separate us from God,
exchanged by your grace for love.
We cannot comprehend the reasoning,
only marvel that salvation comes to us
through a baby born in a stable,
who reaches out to a world in need.

Music: O come, Emmanuel

O Emmanuel—Malcolm Guite

O come, O come, and be our God-with-us
O long-sought With-ness for a world without,
O secret seed, O hidden spring of light.
Come to us Wisdom, come unspoken Name
Come Root, and Key, and King, and holy Flame,
O quickened little wick so tightly curled,
Be folded with us into time and place,
Unfold for us the mystery of grace
And make a womb of all this wounded world.
O heart of heaven beating in the earth,
O tiny hope within our hopelessness
Come to be born, to bear us to our birth,
To touch a dying world with new-made hands
And make these rags of time our swaddling bands.

John 3.5-8

'Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.'

(A moment of silence)

If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins,
All O Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness;
All therefore you are feared.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
All and in his word I put my hope.

There is a transformation that takes place
within the warmth of your embrace.
That certain knowledge that you are
refuge, shelter, fortress and stronghold,
against which no army can succeed.
That you are Brother, Sister, Mother, Father,
the love that knows no bounds.
That you are God
and I am lost outside of your arms.
Create in me a pure heart, O God
and renew a faithful spirit within me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and a willing spirit to sustain me.

O Lord, open our lips
All and our mouths will forever declare your praise.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

**All Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come again and with us ever dwell.**

Isaiah 55

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
 come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labour for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.

See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.
See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
 and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has glorified you.
Seek the Lord while he may be found,
 call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake their way,
 and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.
For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
 and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
 giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
 it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
 and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
For you shall go out in joy,
 and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
 shall burst into song,
 and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
 instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
 for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Music: It came upon the midnight clear

Intercessions

We pray for all
who watch and wait this day;
those who watch for death,
those who wait for birth.

We pray especially for those who watch and wait alone
in fear or with longing,
for those whose hopes are dashed,
and for those who had no hope to start with.

We pray for those kept from home this year,
and for those who cannot leave their home.

May the piercing cry of a child
in the darkness
be a symbol of hope for a world
weary with suffering.

May the soft footfall of shepherds
replace the ominous march
of soldiers' boots.

May the light of the Christmas star
do away with the need for sirens and hospital lights.
And may peace of body, mind and spirit
gain a foothold under the angels' song.

May we hold our collective breath
and find light creeping in
to nudge the darkness of the world
into submission,
as love pushes at the boundaries,
making change possible.

And so may the stable
become the sign of stability.

May the star become the sign of new hope.

And may the cradle be the sign of the promise for all the world.

All

Amen.

Prayer of St Patrick

I arise today through the strength of heaven;
light of the sun,
splendour of fire,
swiftness of wind,
depth of sea,
stability of earth,
firmness of rock.

I arise today through God's strength to pilot me;
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's hand to guard me.

Afar or anear,
alone or in a multitude.
Christ shield me today
against wounding.

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ in me.

I arise today through the mighty strength
of the Lord of Creation

All **Amen.**

Music: A great and mighty wonder

As we prepare to welcome the Christ Child,
may we find rest in the busyness,
stillness in the storm
and light in the darkness.

All **Amen.**